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## Good to Know: Dec. 31 a Day of Truth for VLM

By Desiree Parker

Sunday, December 13, 2009



December 31 will be the day of truth for one of my favorite places in the area, thanks to the crummy economy and some unforeseen circumstances.

My husband and I have been taking our son to the Virginia Living Museum in Newport News since he was a baby. We've been members now for 6 years, and each time we go we discover something new and have a fantastic time. Our son loves it there, and knows all the animals and much of the staff, and always enjoys their rotating exhibits.

When I heard earlier in the year that the VLM was having an unusual financial crisis, I was worried.

Apparently, the state hadn't come through with some promised funding after the new building was completed in 2004. The museum had to finance the rest, which was working out fine until the recession and the banking crisis. The bank called in the note (which I never knew was possible), and if the museum doesn't come up with \$9 million by December 31, well – they didn't finish that sentence. We have to assume the worst.

Luck was on the side of the VLM, and in May a secret donor promised 2-to-1 funding – so if the museum raised \$3 million, the donor would give \$6 million to pay off the bank.

The wonderful news is that there's only \$100,000 left to raise!

Page Hayhurst, the museum's executive director, had an interview on the Tide, 92.3fm, recently and she told them that the community has really rallied. "This is a place they care about, and they want to see it stick around," she said.

Money has been streaming in since they launched their "Opportunity Fund" campaign in May, Hayhurst said. "We've seen everything from major donors... to kids emptying piggybanks at the front desk.

"We really believe we can get there, but we need help from the community."

The staff at the museum is being really positive, looking at this situation as an opportunity and not a crisis. Whichever way you look at it, "it's a watershed moment for the museum," as Hayhurst said.

Two weeks left, and \$100,000 to go. If you've never been, go visit in the next week or two and see what you think. Visit their **Web site** to donate, or just do it at the front desk. Time is running short.

### Other news

The Rita Welsh Adult Literacy Program is offering ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) classes at Discovery Business Park in New Town starting January 25. The classes are designed for local workers and will focus on skills needed to succeed in the workplace.

Improved English skills lead to improved communication, a safer work environment, and more efficient work habits, according to program folks. Employees will receive thirty hours of instruction from professionally trained TESOL instructors, all classroom materials, additional tutor support as needed, and pre and post assessment to measure progress. Employers offering this benefit to their employees can receive a tax break.

Give the gift of literacy to your employees this year! Visit their **Web site** to learn more.

Beyond Boobs!, a breast health group comprised of women who have survived breast cancer, is hosting a fundraiser and calendar signing at Kinks, Quirks and Caffeine in Colony Square Shopping Center this Sunday from 5 pm to 8 pm. Proceeds will go to support breast cancer awareness.

Their calendars feature local survivors, and are always fun and tasteful. Stop by to support these ladies and do some holiday shopping.

**Know something or someone good to know? Tell others by sharing it with Desiree Parker.** Email her at [desiree@wydaily.com](mailto:desiree@wydaily.com)

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